



## Unit AS 2:

# The Study of Prose pre 1900

## Bram Stoker: Dracula

*In this Unit there are 4 Assessment Objectives involved – A01, A02, A03 and A05.*

### A01: Textual knowledge and understanding, and communication

*In this examination, the candidate should be able to articulate informed and relevant responses that communicate effectively knowledge and understanding of a selected novel.*

*This AO involves the student's knowledge and understanding of the novel, and ability to express relevant ideas accurately and coherently, using appropriate terminology and concepts. Quality of written communication is taken into consideration in all units.*

### Dracula: Summary and structure

#### Chapters I-IV

The novel begins where it will end, in Transylvania. Jonathan Harker, a young and newly qualified solicitor has been sent abroad by his employer to finalize the sale of a property in London to a nobleman, Count Dracula. At first his interest in his surroundings is that of an enthusiastic tourist. He enjoys his independence from the office, looks forward to his impending marriage and notes the peculiarities of the country with a view to relating them to his fiancée. On his arrival at Castle Dracula, however, the mood soon darkens. The charm of the Count's manner is set against the disgust caused by his rank breath and his sharp and protruding canine teeth. The absence of any reflection of the Count in a mirror, his violence in seizing Harker's throat when he cuts himself shaving, and his reaction to a crucifix chart Harker's mounting horror as he begins to understand that he himself is "the only living soul within the place".

The Count boasts of the deeds of his forebears, asks some questions about the practicalities of life in England, and explains a little of his reasons for going to London, where he will be able to pass unknown. Harker finds that his freedom is more and more curtailed. He may not leave; his letters are censored or destroyed. He sees the Count leave the castle on a nocturnal expedition, running down a sheer wall like a lizard, and return with a bundle – a baby, whose mother his wolves carry off. He is attacked and almost overcome by three seductive vampire women and only the intervention of the furious Count saves him. The baby is thrown to the three women.



He understands that the day of his death has been determined.

### Escape from the Castle

Arrangements for the Count's departure are set in train, apparently involving a large number of heavy wooden boxes. Harker in desperation decides to attempt the same scaling of the wall as he had seen performed by the Count. This takes him to a part of the castle unknown to him where he finds the Count in one of the earth-filled wooden boxes, neither dead nor alive. In terror he flees and returns to his room, but next day attempts the wall again, and again finds the Count in the earth-filled box, but this time looking as if his youth had been half renewed, and "simply gorged with blood; he lay like a filthy leech". Realizing what he is about to release upon London, he strikes at the face with a shovel, but is unable to go further. As the Count's boxes are carried out, leaving Harker to the vampire women, he resolves, close to madness, to scale the wall further than before and so escape from the castle. This part of the narrative stops with his voicing the name of his fiancée: "Mina!"

## Chapters V-VIII

Several new elements of the plot are opened up in these chapters. Three members of the team which later will destroy Dracula are introduced. (Jonathan Harker we have already met; Mina we know by name; van Helsing will arrive later.) They are introduced through Lucy Westenra's correspondence with her friend Mina Murray, in which she speaks of her three suitors: John Seward "the lunatic asylum man, with the strong jaw and the good forehead", the modest American adventurer Quincy P. Morris and Arthur Holmwood (later to be Lord Godalming). The correspondence also serves in the characterization of Lucy – vivacious and excited at having had three proposals in one day, regretful that she has had to turn down any of them – "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her...?" From the start the girlish and fashionable Lucy is made to contrast with the serious, conscientious Mina.

A second plot strand: the great storm at Whitby, the accompaniment to Dracula's arrival in England in the shape of a large black dog, occurs during the holiday of the two girls in this town. Some of the narrative of this sensational event comes from the journal of Mina, the rest from a newspaper account which also prints the log of the wrecked ship. Stoker is beginning to vary the sources of his narrative. This event is followed by Mina's concern about Lucy's exhaustion and sleepwalking, her search for Lucy one night and seeing her on their favourite seat on the cliff, where "it seemed to me as though something dark stood behind the seat...and bent over it". Mina notices little puncture wounds in her throat but does not realize their significance. Lucy describes her experience on the cliff to Mina, without seeming sure if it was a dream or not: "something long and dark with red eyes...something very sweet and very bitter all around me all at once". (This is the first expression of the two-sided nature of a vampire encounter. Later, Mina will say something very similar.)

Lucy's partial recovery comes after the Count's removal to London. Information about this is conveyed in the commercial correspondence of the delivery agents who take charge of the boxes.

Another important plot strand is initiated through the phonograph<sup>1</sup> diary of Dr Seward, now returned disappointed in love to his lunatic asylum. In this diary he details the behaviour of Renfield, one of his patients. Renfield is a man with a fixed idea, which Seward only gradually understands, eating flies and spiders because he claims they

<sup>1</sup> Phonograph: a machine for recording the human voice, a prototype of the gramophone.



give life to him. Seward diagnoses him as “a zoophagous (life-eating) maniac”. The day after the delivery of Dracula’s boxes at Carfax (next door to the asylum) Seward notes a “strange and sudden change” in his patient. He escapes and makes for Carfax, and the doctor, attempting to recapture him, hears him raving that the Master he has long worshipped is now at hand and can be expected to distribute “good things”.

The final plot strand in this section, and linking it to the first section, is news for Mina from a hospital in Buda-Pesth that Jonathan Harker has been a patient there for six weeks suffering from brain fever, but has now recovered from delirium. He had survived the escape from Castle Dracula.

## Chapters IX-XII

This section begins with the marriage of Jonathan Harker and Mina, which takes place in the hospital in Buda-pesth. Despite some dark hints from the nursing sister<sup>2</sup> who has cared for him, the events of the recent past prior to his breakdown, which Harker has recorded in his diary, remain unknown to her. He gives Mina the diary but she vows never to read it unless his well-being or “some stern duty” should make it necessary. In a letter to Lucy she expresses the thought that she is happy because she has fulfilled her womanly duty and hopes that Lucy may be “all happy” in her own married life. Harker and Mina now drop out of the story. They will join the team battling with Dracula after they return to England.

Ironically, in view of Mina’s hopes for her friend’s happiness, the rest of this section deals with a second and more sustained attack on Lucy by the vampire, this time in London. Dr Seward, called in by his friend Arthur Holmwood (Lucy’s fiancé) to act as her physician, charts her progress with concern – pallor, a painful throat, those little scars on the neck, the gums drawn back and the teeth longer and sharper than usual. “A series of little circumstances” seems to conspire to leave Lucy increasingly vulnerable to the attacks: Seward’s failure to stay wakeful and watch over her, a delayed telegram<sup>3</sup>, Holmwood’s absence because of the illness of his father, a window left open at night contrary to instructions, the rapidly declining health and eventual death of Lucy’s mother which deprives her of another protector. Seward is seriously concerned and calls in his old teacher Professor van Helsing from Amsterdam. (Van Helsing’s arrival means the list of major characters is now complete.) The Professor’s response is grave and shocked: “This is no jest but life and death, perhaps more.” He suspects more than he is prepared to reveal, and Lucy’s changing appearance horrifies him. Unlike Seward, he does not see Lucy’s illness as primarily a medical case and from an early stage is hinting that forces more than natural are involved.

The treatment of Lucy involves modern techniques. Lucy receives no fewer than four blood transfusions (from Holmwood, Seward, van Helsing himself and Quincy Morris). However, van Helsing also uses treatment drawn from ancient superstition and later from religion. Garlic flowers are used to seal the bedroom.

From Lucy’s memorandum we learn of the pressure from outside the house – the persistent “flapping at the window” of a bat, the howling of a wolf. Suddenly the defences are breached. Lucy’s mother lies dead and Lucy loses consciousness. At her death, which soon follows, van Helsing violently prevents Holmwood from kissing her: “Not for your life! Not for your living soul and hers!” When Seward says that “There is peace for her at last. It is the end”, van Helsing solemnly contradicts him: “It is only the beginning!”

**2** A nun, member of a religious order devoted to nursing the sick.  
**3** Means of communication for urgent messages, delivered in written form, usually by the Post Office.



The plot strand involving Renfield is maintained during these chapters. Again he escapes, makes his way to Carfax and is recaptured. Seward dimly understands that he is under some influence that comes and goes. He notes that Renfield is in despair because “He” has deserted him and from now on he must fend for himself. After one violent incident, after licking up blood from the floor he repeats the phrase “The blood is the life”.<sup>4</sup> During another he screams, “I’ll fight for my Lord and Master!” These clues are seen as incoherent ravings. No connection is yet made by Seward between Renfield’s behaviour and events elsewhere.

At this point the reader is dealing with four “stories” – the marriage of Mina and Jonathan, the unavailing attempt to save Lucy, the ravings of the lunatic Renfield, and in the background but unforgettable the closeness of the Count to the central events.

## Chapters XIII-XVI

During this phase of the plot Dracula is quiescent or hunting elsewhere and Renfield reasonably sane. The focus is on Lucy’s activity as a vampire and the sudden involvement of the Harkers in the resistance to the Count.

Van Helsing in protecting Lucy’s body adds the crucifix to the wild garlic he had been using against the evil influence. The nature of what he is dealing with is becoming increasingly clear to him and he refers to Lucy at times as “she”, at other times as “it”. He feels the strain, and lapses into a violent fit of hysterics. Seward, on the other hand, more of a materialist and more limited in his imagination, thinks of the death of Lucy as a purely medical matter caused by “nervous prostration following on great loss or waste of blood” and writes “FINIS”<sup>5</sup> in his diary.

On a trip to London with his wife, Jonathan Harker is horrified to see a man he believes to be the Count – “but he has grown young!” Mina tries to calm him, and knows that the time has come when she must read the diary he entrusted to her.

Through newspaper cuttings (“THE HAMPSTEAD HORROR – Another Child Injured”) Lucy’s excursions from the tomb are suggested. The reader may link this story with the “dreadful bundle” which Harker saw Dracula bring back to the castle. The account of Lucy’s activities is interspersed with Mina’s journal entries telling of how van Helsing, who knew of her through examining Lucy’s papers, visits the Harkers. He reads her journal account of events in Whitby: “It opens the gate to me.” Out of concern for her husband she then shows him the Transylvania diary. Now van Helsing is getting the information he needs. He is full of admiration for Mina’s qualities, and expresses it eloquently: “She is one of God’s women, fashioned by His own hand to show us men and other women that there is a heaven where we can enter...So true, so sweet, so noble, so little an egoist.” Later he will express an equal admiration for her intellectual capacities.

In London, he faces his materialist<sup>6</sup> ex-pupil and states his belief in the limitations of science. He is now able to explain to the astounded Seward the nature of the vampire and his certainty that the series of night attacks on small children was carried out by Lucy.

Lucy’s tomb: Seward and van Helsing make their first visit to Lucy’s tomb by night. They find the coffin empty. Lucy, “a white dim streak” is prevented from carrying a sleeping infant into the tomb. On their second visit to the tomb, this time by day, they

<sup>4</sup> A Biblical reference: Deuteronomy 12:23. ““Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh.”

<sup>5</sup> Latin for “The End”.

<sup>6</sup> Inclined to dismiss spiritual or religious explanations in favour of physical (material) ones.



find Lucy's body. Her lips are red, her teeth sharp. Seward can not believe she is dead. Van Helsing knows what they must do. "I shall cut off her head and fill her mouth with garlic, and I shall drive a stake through her body." But, he decides, Arthur Holmwood must be present. He must know the truth about the woman he loved, must "pass through the bitter waters to reach the sweet".<sup>7</sup> It is with great difficulty that Arthur is persuaded to come to the tomb.

The third visit is by night. Once more the coffin is empty. Van Helsing seals the tomb against further re-entry producing the Host for this purpose. ("I have an Indulgence,"<sup>8</sup> is his only explanation.) Although a crucifix has been used, this is the first time the Sacred Wafer<sup>9</sup> has appeared. The seriousness of his action "appals" the others. The vampire-Lucy returns, again with a bundle at her breast, but now revealed for what she is, by turns "snarling" and "voluptuous" and "diabolically sweet". She is trapped between the upheld crucifix and the sacred closure of the door of the vault. The Professor lets her through the door and replaces the seal. The next day, on the fourth visit, van Helsing carries out his purpose, first explaining formally to them the nature of vampirism and that what they do will free the soul of Lucy. "It will be a blessed hand for her that strikes the blow that sets her free." The "blessed hand" belongs to Arthur. His face expresses "high duty". After it is done they rejoice to see that Lucy's face has regained the "unequaled sweetness and purity it had worn in life".

Before they depart van Helsing addresses them. He reminds them that there is a greater task ahead. – the extirpation of the Count. Events up to now have been a prelude. Now their "great quest" must begin.

## Chapters XVII-XVIII

The great quest will be phrased in various ways – as a noble task, "our cause", a "high and terrible purpose", a Crusade against evil.

When the team begins its work Mina quickly comes to the fore. Seward feels that despite her femininity she is strong enough to know the shocking details of Lucy's death. There will however be an ongoing discussion of how active a role Mina, first as a woman then as a victim of Dracula, should play in the campaign. She is the first to understand and put into effect a crucial requirement: a chronological record for understanding the Count's past moves and predicting his future purposes. Her husband's researches in Whitby at once bear fruit in the realization that Dracula's lair is in Carfax.

At a conference of war van Helsing explains to them in more detail the result of his investigations into the nature of vampirism, the history of the Count, and the dreadful consequences of failure. "We are face to face with duty," he tells them, and over his golden crucifix they shake hands in solemn compact. They have certain advantages: teamwork, technology, the use of daylight (and of money, as becomes apparent). Their strategy is rapidly agreed: to locate Dracula's boxes, sterilize the earth contained in them, and hunt him down by daylight. Everything seems purposefully in train.

Mina also visits Renfield, who again gives the clearest possible account of his mania: "For the blood is the life." Shortly afterwards he implores Seward to be allowed to depart from the asylum – for the sake of others. He seems at his sanest at this point and Seward notes that he has never met with such self-understanding in a lunatic. His words and behaviour will become significant and will be understood later. Seward

<sup>7</sup> Another Biblical reference: Exodus 15.23-25

<sup>8</sup> A privilege or permission granted on the highest authority, in this case probably that of the Pope.

<sup>9</sup> Disc of unleavened bread representing the body of Christ, used in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Also known as the Host.



refuses his request because “he seems so mixed up with the Count in an indexy kind of way”. His vague wording reflects his lack of certainty.

## Chapters XIX-XXI

### Attack and counter-attack

A search of Dracula’s Carfax house is instigated at once. Amidst the dust, the stench and the rats the searchers are disconcerted to find that only twenty-nine of the fifty earth chests remain. The search for the boxes continues in various parts of London with some success. The last lair to be located is in Piccadilly. However the partial success of this activity is offset by a growing paleness and drowsiness in Mina, the first signs of the Count’s activity within the walls of the Purfleet asylum. The signs build up that she is or will be his next victim.

Dracula is entering the asylum through Renfield’s cell. Mina records a dream which ends with “a livid white face bending over [her] out of the mist”. Her lassitude deepens. Dr Seward draws up the evidence in the case of Renfield and concludes that “there is some new scheme of terror afoot!” He tells his suspicions to van Helsing, but they are at a loss what to do. The next night Renfield is found in his cell, covered in blood and badly injured. A negligent warder admits to having “dozed” – merely the latest of the innumerable circumstances that favour the Count.

Van Helsing carries out a trephining<sup>10</sup> operation to remove the blood clot on Renfield’s brain. The patient recovers briefly and can speak for long enough to tell them of how Dracula was able to enter the building, of the promises he (Dracula) made, and of how he came by his injuries. Of how, the day after the Count’s first visit, “When Mrs Harker came to visit me this afternoon she wasn’t the same. It was like tea after the teapot had been watered”. (This is a simile which would have been familiar to any Victorian reader.) They rush to Mina’s room where “What I saw,” says Seward, “appalled me.”

The next pages are some of the most memorable in the novel as Dracula strikes at the heart of the team which is challenging him. Harker lies on the bed in a stupor. Mina is kneeling on the bed, gripped by the Count who is forcing her to drink blood from his chest. Assailed by crucifix and Holy Wafer he turns to vapour and makes his escape. Mina and Dracula have exchanged blood and she is now his. She fully realizes the horror which awaits her and wails in distress that such a fate should befall one who has always tried to do her Christian duty: “Unclean, unclean!” (the cry with which the leper was required to identify himself in Old Testament times). The account she gives them centres on two facts. Having exchanged blood, Mina now belongs to the vampire; he will use her (“my bountiful wine-press for a while”) and she will later join him as his companion. The other fact is that while the Count was assaulting or seducing Mina, she did not want to hinder him.

The task is now doubled in significance: the destruction of the Count is now necessary if Mina’s soul is to be saved.

## Chapters XXII-XXIII

### The team regroups

Mina is taken back into active membership and once again is to play a full part in the enterprise. “There must be no more concealment,” she says, and they discuss openly

**10** An operation that involves boring a hole in the patient’s skull.



the possibilities that she might have to kill herself or ask another to kill her if she brings them into danger. Van Helsing tells her and the group that she must not die, for if Dracula “is still with the quick Un-dead<sup>11</sup>, your death would make you even as he is.” In attempting to provide a spiritual protection for Mina, van Helsing unintentionally burns her forehead with the Holy wafer – the scar is a reminder of the peril her soul is in.

They begin again. The boxes are to be found and dealt with. In sober mood, and with a full sense of their sacred responsibilities to Mina’s soul, they continue their work. Carfax, Mile End, Bermondsey – all are sterilized. The team awaits Dracula in his Piccadilly house.

Van Helsing imparts more vampire lore to the group as they wait for Dracula’s arrival. He appears and is quelled, not by Harker’s knife but by the crucifix and Holy Wafer. Although he escapes, the group know that he has only one more box of earth. Mina now gives the highest expression of the great cause that unites them. “I want you to bear something in mind through all this dreadful time. I know that you must fight – that you must destroy...; but it is not a work of hate. That poor soul who has wrought all this misery is the saddest case of all....You must be pitiful to him too, though it may not hold your hands from his destruction.” She overcomes her husband’s desire for revenge.

Mina’s influence in the group continues to grow, and it is she who has the idea which will carry them far in their pursuit: by van Helsing hypnotizing her, the whereabouts of the Count may be discovered.

This is done. Dracula is on board ship, but van Helsing explains to the others that to avert the peril to Mina’s soul he must be pursued abroad. He will soon be speaking of their mission in explicitly religious terms. “We are ministers of God’s own wish: that the world, and men for whom His Son die, will not be given over to monsters, whose very existence would defame Him. He have (*sic*) allowed us to redeem one soul already, and we go out as the old knights of the Cross to redeem more.”<sup>12</sup> He claims that it may be that they are carrying out a divine purpose in a cosmic battle between good and evil.

## Chapters XXIV-XXVII

### The pursuit

Two points regarding Mina are discussed again. Van Helsing again decides that Mina must be excluded from their councils, not because she is a woman but because she is marked as Dracula’s. She is changing, and the characteristics of the vampire are appearing in her face. Through Mina’s unconscious co-operation Dracula may gain knowledge of their plans. Independently, Mina comes to the same conclusion. However, she insists on accompanying the team, reminding them that she is their clue to Dracula’s location on his journey. She further makes them swear an oath that if it should be necessary they will kill her. At her request, and in anticipation of such an event, she makes them read the Burial Service over her.

Dracula’s ship is identified, sailing east to Varna. His pursuers follow by rail. Again he eludes them but, concentrating on his own escape he relaxes his influence on Mina. Van Helsing’s knowledge of criminal psychology helps him to an insight into Dracula’s future movements. (This is one of several references to late nineteenth-century

<sup>11</sup> “Un-dead”: Stoker popularized this word.

<sup>12</sup> “The knights of the Cross”- the Crusaders. Whatever the reality, their ostensible purpose was the salvation of human souls.



science and technology used to enforce the theme of modern ingenuity combating ancient evil.)

The hypnosis of Mina becomes less and less effective as the hunters close in by land and water, tracking the movements of the box of earth. An analysis of the situation in almost military terms – transport and terrain – by the intelligent Mina (“man-brain in woman’s body”, says van Helsing) helps them further narrow the focus of search.

Close to Castle Dracula the team divides and Mina accompanies the Professor. The hypnosis now fails completely. The two are beset by the three vampire women, calling on Mina to join them. Next day van Helsing destroys them in their tombs, and sterilizes the empty tomb of Dracula.

“They are racing for the sunset.” (One of many scenes which seems almost written for the about-to-be-invented medium of film.) Watched by Mina and van Helsing from a low hill, the gypsies with the cart carrying the box of earth, a gathering pack of Dracula’s wolves, Jonathan Harker and Arthur, and Quincey Morris and Seward on horseback converge on the Castle. There is a fracas round the box where Morris is fatally injured. But the box is opened and Dracula is decapitated. As with Lucy, there comes with death a final restoration of humanity, a look of peace on the face of the Count. The dying Quincey Morris is exultant as he points to Mina’s forehead, now free of the scar of pollution: “The curse has passed away.”

## Themes

In the above summary some themes are touched on, and these and others may be further investigated.

For example, the theme of duty (Mina’s sense of duty seen in her letter to Lucy from Buda-Pesth; Arthur’s duty to Lucy in his actions in her tomb; van Helsing’s sense of a duty owed to mankind, and to God).

Van Helsing and Seward discuss and embody the theme of the power and limitation of science and the materialist outlook.

There is abundant and unignorable evidence of nineteenth-century gender roles and gender stereotyping. And there are some surprises here.



## A02: Narrative methods

*In this examination, the candidate should analyse the writer's use of such narrative methods as form, structure and language.*

*The student should analyse relevantly the ways in which meanings are shaped in novels. This means identifying narrative methods and showing how these methods relate to the key terms of the question.*

Discussing narrative methods - advice to teachers and students:

As this unit is closed book, examiners will be realistic about the amount of detail which can be provided in the time available. It is anticipated that the larger-scale features of form, structure and language will be most useful in constructing a relevant response in the time available.

A few general stylistic features:

- **Form and structure**

### **Use of contrasting characters**

Lucy is a wealthy, protected girl living a very developed social life in fashionable London. She possesses radiant beauty and is surrounded by admirers, to her evident delight ("three proposals in one day!") She seems giddily sorry to disappoint any of them. As one of the Un-dead, the sensual, voluptuous, languorous sides of her personality are horribly accentuated.

Apart from the reciprocal affection the two friends feel, Mina is in every way a contrast to Lucy. She is not rich and works as a school-teacher to support herself. She lives in a provincial town and her aspirations are domestic. Her seriousness is expressed in her loving concern for her friend, and in her attitude to her husband and her marriage. Her acute intelligence is praised by van Helsing. When threatened with the prospect of joining the Un-dead her thoughts are for the welfare of others.

An interesting though more nuanced contrast might be drawn for the Professor and his former pupil.

### **Use of mixed narrative techniques**

There is no single narrative voice and no reliable narrator. Stoker tells the story through diaries, letters, newspaper reports, business notes, telegrams, a ship's log. Each of the writers of these communications has only a partial view of events and is often proved wrong. One effect of all of this is that we gain insight into the thoughts and feelings of most of the other characters, but not into Dracula himself. Documents from him are few and far between, and the central character retains his mystery and his power to instil fear. Another effect is that it enables characterization. Many characters can be identified by the way they write or speak. For example van Helsing's clear thinking has to be discerned through his "puddled" English; Mina's reliance on words like "dear", "sweet", "kind" and "nice" is intended by Stoker to emphasise her gentleness and goodness.



- **Language and imagery**

The use of religious imagery, usually by van Helsing in describing the enterprise which the team is embarked upon has already been noted. At times the team is paralleled with Christ, bearing a cross as they attempt to redeem a soul. This imagery may also be seen as part of the characterization of van Helsing. He is a man of many sufferings – a mad wife, a dead child – and he has influential contacts in the Church.



## A03: Contexts

*In this examination, the candidate should demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which a novel is written and received by drawing on appropriate information from outside the novel.*

*No particular type of context will be stipulated in the question. However, contextual information which is made relevant to the key terms of the question will be rewarded. Students should be aware that little credit can be given for contextual information that is introduced merely for its own sake. They should remember that the text has primacy over the context. A good response will use contextual information sparingly and judiciously.*

The following information is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive, but is intended as a helpful guide to teachers and students. It reflects some of the contextual areas which might be found useful. Remember the remarks above about balancing text and context in a response.

These contextual points may be found relevant to *Dracula*.

- **Social and historical context**

Several concerns common in the Victorian era find a reflection in the motifs of *Dracula*. One anxiety of an age which lacked certainty about the moment of death, the persistence of coma and fugue states and at times the possibility of resuscitation, was the fear of premature burial. This is reflected in several of the short stories of Edgar Allan Poe, and also in the newspapers of the time. Another preoccupation is the power of hypnotism (Charcot is mentioned by Dr Seward) and especially the power of the hypnotizer over the subject. Phrenology<sup>13</sup> and physiognomy<sup>14</sup> had a status as sciences which they no longer retain. Other examples of how the novel taps into the deep-seated fears of its contemporary society can be found.

- **Biographical context**

Stoker worked as a drama critic and a theatre manager, and there are certainly echoes of Shakespeare plays with which he would have been familiar (*Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Hamlet*) in the novel. It may or may not be fanciful to link the meticulous transcribing work carried out by Mina with the type of work done by Stoker as a civil servant. Certainly, he would have been aware of the importance of orderly chronological recording of events if one is to understand and address a situation, even if the tedium of such work eventually led to his laying down his post. Serious illness in his youth followed by conspicuous athletic success may contribute to the admiration expressed in the novel for active, adventurous manhood. (Expressed by female characters; written by a man!) But the cult of “muscular Christianity”<sup>15</sup> was still widespread at the time of the novel’s writing.

- **Literary and cultural context**

Rooted in folklore the vampire theme was unavoidable in the artistic activity of the late nineteenth century, manifesting itself in both literature and painting. It had already been popular for a hundred years when Stoker began *Dracula* and of course it

**13** Study of the shape of the head and skull in the belief that it was an indicator of character.

**14** Similar to the above: judging character from physical features.

**15** A combination of evangelical Christianity and a sometimes strident commitment to the culture of physical health and strength.



has gone on developing and has retained its popularity into the twenty-first century. It can be used for a wide range of purposes, for example to consider the nature of the outsider in society, to question gender stereotypes, or just for a simple horror story – a flesh-creeper.

Another literary motif popular at the time was that of the hidden individual in a great city, intent on infecting it with a deadly plague. This was often associated with a mistrust of foreigners. Some of the activities of the terrorists of the twenty-first century and the fears which they engender would have been familiar to the nineteenth.

The contemporary interest in hypnotism has already been mentioned. George du Maurier's successful novel *Svengali* (a word still used to denote the exertion of a malign influence over an individual) was published only two years before *Dracula*.

*Dracula* was filmed early and often and its cultural influence has spread largely by this means. It is noticeable that academic histories of English Literature published in the first half of the twentieth century usually ignore both the novel and its author.



## A05: Argument and interpretation

*In this examination, the candidate should offer opinion or judgment in response to the given reading of the text, taking account of the key terms as the basis of the argument. This AO is the driver of Unit AS 2 and is of primary importance.*

*A05 can be satisfied in full by the candidate developing his/her own reading in response to the given reading. If, however, critics are used, they must be:*

- *used with understanding;*
- *incorporated into the argument to reinforce or be seen as an alternative to the student's opinion;*
- *not used as a substitute for the development of the student's own opinion;*
- *properly acknowledged.*

Coherence and relevance of argument will be rewarded. Students should be aware of the importance of planning in the sequencing, development and illustration of the reading they wish to put forward. They should also beware of the danger of replacing the key terms of the question with others of their own choosing which they assume mean much the same thing.

It might also be helpful to note that in the predecessor of this unit examiners frequently regretted the sacrifice of quality to quantity in responses.

The following information is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive, but is intended as a starting point for teachers and students. It reflects some of the thematic, stylistic and contextual issues which may be explored and developed further both in the classroom and through teachers' and students' own independent research.

### Specimen question:

In *Dracula*, Stoker challenges the typical nineteenth-century view of women. With reference to the narrative methods used in the novel, and relevant contextual information, **show to what extent** you agree with the above statement.

In order to construct a meaningful and cogent argument (and to move beyond making simple assertions and offering unsupported opinions) students should use A02 and A03 elements to support and enhance their point of view. Convincing arguments will be based on a secure understanding of how Stoker has used narrative methods (A02) to convey his message. Students will also encounter difficulties in presenting an argument which is focused on the stimulus statement without knowledge of the context(s) in which the novel is written and received (A03).

A few relevant points are listed below. Some of these will come to mind at once. Some are the product of a little reflection. They will enable the student to establish a basis for his/her argument, and can then be matched with the novel itself and the narrative methods which Stoker uses.



### **Social-historical context on nineteenth-century views of women**

Since “typicality” is open to individual interpretation, a working definition should be offered

- Ideology of separate spheres: the public sphere of business, commerce, politics and action assigned to man, and the private sphere to women.  
Lucy seems securely within the female sphere, but what about Mina?
- Idea of women having a moral duty to their families and husbands.  
Not just to these! Mina is a moral inspiration to the whole team. What narrative methods does Stoker use to convey this?
- A tirelessly patient and self-sacrificing wife: “The Angel in the House”.  
Mina’s rescue of and care for her husband; the “train fiend” even learns the time-tables off by heart for her husband’s convenience! Self-sacrificing: she makes the group swear an oath to kill her if it becomes necessary.
- Refinement and modesty as a cultural norm.  
Use of language: words such as “dainty” and “modest” used frequently about Mina; much less the case with Lucy: is there a lack of refinement in her vanity at having received “three proposals in a day”?
- Demonization of the “fallen woman”.  
Descriptions of the three vampire women in Castle Dracula, and of Lucy in her “Un-dead” phase.

Other contextual areas/information will of course be accepted provided relevance is demonstrated.

It is not necessary for the student wholly to agree or disagree with the stimulus statement. Probably a qualified answer will emerge, demonstrating that in some respects, such as Mina’s acuity and practical intelligence Stoker does indeed go counter to expected nineteenth-century stereotypes of women, although in other respects he affirms them.



## Glossary

Character v characterization

Unreliable narrator/ multiple narrators

Epistolary novel

Plot strands

Motifs

Imagery

Structure

Climax

Gothic horror novel

